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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001044

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS

TAGS: OVIP NEGROPONTE JOHN PREL PGOV AMGT CONS MARR CH VM  
SUBJECT: (U) Deputy Secretary Negroponte's September 11, 2008  
conversation with Vietnam Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen  
Van Huong

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¶1. (U) September 11, 2008; 14:00; Hanoi, Vietnam.

¶2. (U) Participants:

U.S.  
The Deputy Secretary  
Ambassador Michael Michalak  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Scot Marciel  
PolCouns Brian Aggeler  
D Special Asst. Kaye Lee  
D Special Asst. Ted Wittenstein  
Jane Bocklage (Embassy Notetaker)

Vietnam  
Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong  
MPS Senior Colonel Dao Tam Chau  
MPS General Security Deputy Director General To Lam  
MFA Director General Nguyen Ba Hung  
MFA Assistant Director Americas Department Le Chi Dung

¶3. (SBU) SUMMARY. Meeting September 11, the Deputy Secretary and  
Vietnam's Vice Minister for Public Security (MPS) Nguyen Van Huong  
expressed pleasure at the continued development of a strong  
bilateral relationship. VM Huong offered contradictory views on the  
expansion of the Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) consular district denying  
that the Government of Vietnam places restrictions on diplomats'  
movements, but complaining about meetings with dissidents. He  
requested that U.S. diplomats "notify" the MPS and local officials  
in advance of "sensitive" meetings. VM Huong expressed his views on  
China's territorial claim in the South China Sea and lamented the  
lack of U.S. support for Vietnam's position. Huong said the  
Minister of Public Security Le Hong Anh planned to visit the U.S. in  
the near future. END SUMMARY.

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HO CHI MINH CITY CONSULAR DISTRICT  
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¶4. (SBU) The Deputy Secretary urged Vietnam to recognize ConGen Ho  
Chi Minh City's (HCMC) full consular district, assuring VM Huong  
that consulate officers have no hidden agenda when they travel  
outside of Ho Chi Minh City. VM Huong acknowledged that the work of  
U.S. diplomats was not a threat, but noted that southern Vietnam has  
regions with "special characteristics," including areas with a high  
concentration of ethnic minorities, particularly Khmers. The  
consular district expansion must take into consideration these  
special characteristics. When pressed, Huong denied that Vietnam  
restricts the work of diplomats and insisted that U.S. diplomats  
from Hanoi and HCMC can go where they want to go. He said this was  
the first he had heard of the problem.

¶ 15. (SBU) At the same time, Huong asserted that the MPS often hears complaints from local officials regarding U.S. diplomats' meetings with local people. Highlighting recent meetings by officers in HCMC with political dissidents, Huong explained that local authorities believe such meetings are counterproductive, encourage unlawful activities, and demonstrate U.S. support for activities against the government. Huong said that national level MPS officials understand the U.S desire to meet with such people, but noted the need to respect local authorities. Huong requested that the U.S. inform local authorities in advance of all such meetings and suggested that there be a direct and official line of communication to inform MPS of U.S. meetings with "sensitive individuals." The Deputy Secretary explained U.S. diplomats around the world meet with all different types of people in the societies where they are posted. Huong noted that while trust is growing between the U.S., the U.S. must understand that there are still Vietnamese who are sensitive about the role of the U.S. He committed to engage with the Ambassador on this issue.

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REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA  
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¶ 16. (SBU) Huong expressed the view that regional security, peace and prosperity cannot be accomplished without the presence of the U.S., adding that the U.S. presence can help regulate relationships in the region. He emphasized that Vietnam seeks good relations with all countries, particularly its neighbors; however, Vietnam cannot accept China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. Offering strong MPS support for the upcoming dialogue on defense issues in October with Assistant Secretary Kimmitt, Huong hoped the dialogue would include an in-depth discussion of this issue. In response to Huong's lament that the U.S. does not take a position on the South China Sea, the Deputy Secretary underscored that the USG does

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support the right of U.S. businesses to carry out legitimate business with Vietnam.

MICHALAK